

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 08390 081615Z

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 845

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 8390

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SY, LE

SUBJECT: SYRIAN NATIONAL PARTY WINS GROWING REACCEPTANCE BY SARG

1. RELIABLE SOURCE INFORMED US THAT ISAM MAHAYRI, LEADER OF FACTION OF SYRIAN NATIONAL APTTY (SNP) CLAIMING LEGITIMACY AS TRUE SPOKESMAN FOR SNP IDEOLOGY, RETURNED TO DAMASCUS IN MID-NOVEMBER FOLLOWING EXTENDED EXILE IN LATIN AMERICA. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, MAHAYRI WAS JAILED IN DAMASCUS AS RESULT OF HIS PARTY ACTIVITIES, AND RELEASED IN 1970. AFTER INITIAL RESIDENCE IN BEIRUT, HE CHOSE BRAZIL AS HIS EXILE HEADQUARTERS. DURING LEBANESE CRISIS HE EMERGED IN SYRIAN COMMUNITY IN BRAZIL AS DEFENDER OF SARG MILITARY INTERVENTION. HIS POLITICAL EFFORTS APPARENTLY ATTRACTED FAVORABLE ATTENTION OF SARG EMBASSY, WHICH COMMUNICATED ITS IMPRESSIONS TO DAMASCUS MFA. SOME WEEKS AGO SYRIAN AMBASSADOR IN BRAZIL INFORMED MAHAYRI SARG HAD AUTHORIZED HIM TO INVITE MAHAYRI TO RETURN TO SYRIA. MAHAYRI FLEW TO AMMAN AND INITIATED CONTACTS WITH DAMASCUS TO CONFIRM CHANGE IN SARG ATTITUDE. MAHAYRI SEEMINGLY SATISFIED, FOR AROUND NOV. 18 HE MET AT SYRO-JORDANIAN BORDER BY FELLOW SNP MEMBER SHAWQI KHAYRALLAH AND MEMBER OF BAATH PARTY REGIONAL COMMAND AND ESCORTED TO HIS HOME IN DAMASCUS, SOURCE, WHO HAS TALKED WITH MAHAYRI, STATED SARG EXPECTS HIM TO PROMOTE SYRIAN POLICY AMONG HIS SNP COMRADES IN LEBANON.

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PAGE 02 DAMASC 08390 081615Z

2. ANOTHER SIGN OF GROWING SNP REHABILITATION IS PUBLICATION OF ARTICLES BY SHAWQI KHAYRALLAH IN DAMASCUS AL-THAWRAH. KHAYRALLAH HAS BEEN PROPOUNDING ESTABLISHMENT OF SYRO-JORDANINA-PALESTINIAN-LEBANESE CONFEDERATION, A REFLECTION OF SNP'S VISION OF "NATURAL SYRIA." HE HAS BEEN VOCAL SUPPORTER OF SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON SINCE HE BEGAN HIS FIVE-TIMES-WEEKLY COLUMN IN AL-THAWRAH LAST JULY, SUPPLEMENTED BY TWICE-DAILY RADIO EXPOSITIONS. HE CLAIMS HIS VIEWS HAVE BEEN FAVORABLY RECEIVED BY PRES. ASAD.

3. THIRD BIT OF EVIDENCE WAS UTILIZATION BY ASAD REGIME, PRIMARILY THROUGH COL. MUHAMMAD AL-KHULI AND FOUNDER KHADDAM, OF ABDULLAH SAADAH, RELATIVE OF SNP FOUNDER ANTUN SAADAH. ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCE AND CONFIDENT OF SAADAH AT GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE, SAADAH WAS OFFERED LODGING AT OFFICERS CLUB ON HIS VISITS DURING SUMMER CRISIS AND WAS ENLISTED AS INTERMEDIARY IN ATTEMPT TO WIN OVER TO SYRIAN SIDE SOME ELEMENTS OF SNP HOSTILE TO SYRIA'S INITIATIVE IN LEBANON.

4. COMMENT: SOURCES OF ABOVE INFO, INCLUDING KHAYRALLAH'S COMMENTS TO EMBOFF, ARE AGREED THAT UPTURN IN SNP FORTUNES WITHIN SYRIA WILL NOT LEAD IN NEAR FUTURE TO LEGALIZATION OF PARTY AND ITS JOINING OF PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL FRONT. NEVERTHELESS, THEY DO NOT ENTIRELY EXCLUDE THIS EVENTUALITY. THEY ALL AGREE THAT BEGINNING OF SNP'S REHABILITATION IN SYRIA HAS BEEN PRINCIPALLY DUE TO DESIRE ON PART OF ASAD REGIME TO MARSHAL ALL POSSIBLE SUPPORT FOR ITS POLICY IN LEBANON.
MURPHY

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